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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09MEXICO880, SCENESETTER FOR THE FIREARMS-TRAFFICKING

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09MEXICO880**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09MEXICO880</a>	<a href="#">2009-03-25 17:51</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Mexico</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://wikileaks.jornada.com.mx/notas/las-armas-mas-letales-llegan-al-narco-mexicano-desde-centroamerica-eu>

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5830  
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USNORTHCOM PETERSON AFB CO  
RUEAHLA/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [MX](#)  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 000880

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CHANGING PARA(S) NUMBERS 7 - 15

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2029  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [MX](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE FIREARMS-TRAFFICKING  
CONFERENCE, APRIL 1-2  
MEXICO 00000880 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Charles V. Barclay. Reason:  
1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On behalf of the U.S. Mission I would like to welcome you to Mexico. The April 1-2 Firearms Trafficking and Enforcement Strategy Conference in Cuernavaca is taking place at a time when bilateral cooperation on law enforcement, has never been stronger. DHS/ICE and DOJ/ATF teams at post work closely with their GOM counterparts in combating the flow of firearms into Mexico, but with violence rising to record levels and large numbers of illegal weapons coming from the U.S. feeding it, the GOM continues to press for more integrated and coordinated actions on firearms trafficking. The conference will help lay the ground work for an improved bilateral strategy against illegal arms trafficking.

#### NARCO-VIOLENCE CONTINUES

2.(SBU) Drug-related violence continues unabated. 2008 set a new record for organized crime-related homicides with approximately 6,263 killings, including 525 law enforcement and military officials. The dramatic uptick in violence is due to push back by drug traffickers resisting the sustained efforts of a very determined Mexican Administration and cartel infighting over diminishing operational space; it is not the harbinger of failure.

¶3. (C) Fueling Mexico's violence is the illicit flow of weapons and ammunition to criminal organizations from the U.S. firearms market, as well as munitions from Central American military stocks. While estimates vary regarding the percentage of U.S. commercial weapons recovered in Mexico, approximately 90 percent of all firearms seized and traced are from the United States. In contrast, at least 90 percent of military origin weapons ) such as grenades and light anti-tank weapons ) are traced to Central American military stocks. Seizure data also suggests that the weapons sought by DTOs have become increasingly higher quality and more powerful. These include the Barrett .50-caliber rifle, the Colt AR-15 .223-caliber assault rifle, the AK-47 7.62-caliber assault rifle and its variants, and the FN 5.57-caliber pistols better known in Mexico as the &cop killer.8

#### MEETING SECURITY CHALLENGES

4.(U) Since taking office, President Calderon has launched joint military-police counter narcotics operations in more

than ten states, raised pay for the military, and increased the GOM's budget for security and justice. These initiatives have contributed to a large number of arrests, including high-level representatives of all the major Mexican cartels. On March 23, the Attorney General's Office released a list offering 30 million pesos (USD 2.1 million) each for information leading to the arrests of 24 drug cartel members and 15 million pesos (USD 1 million) for 13 cartel lieutenants. Also in unprecedented fashion, the Administration has extradited more than 178 persons to face prosecution in the U.S.

¶5. (SBU) Combined military and law enforcement operations have resulted in record seizures of drugs, clandestine laboratories, weapons, and cash. Mexican Attorney General Medina Mora recently noted that over 33,000 weapons have been seized since December 2006; 18,000 of which are assault rifles, AK-47, AR-15s.

¶6. (U) The GOM has also begun the more difficult process of reforming the institutions of justice, transitioning from a written accusatorial to an oral adversarial system of justice, vetting and training police, prosecutors and jailers, establishing a new organized crime tribunal and aggressively addressing corruption. Such wide-reaching actions and enhancements will take time to fully implement, but will considerably strengthen GOM security capabilities across-the-board.

#### MILITARY TIES IMPROVING

¶7. (SBU) Mexico's military plays a fundamental role in the

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fight against organized crime, and in particular narco-trafficking. Both SEDENA and SEMAR, at the direction of the President, have devoted significant resources and manpower towards drug, firearms and bulk cash interdictions and eradication. Mexico's military is pivotal to both Calderon's overall counter-narcotics strategy, and to the evolving bilateral security relationship. The Merida Initiative has laid the groundwork for a significantly closer military-to-military relationship in coming years and Mexico's armed forces have stated their desire to find concrete ways to identify ways to further cooperate in combating mutual threats while respecting national sovereignty.

#### POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

¶8. (SBU) In addition to growing concerns over violence and the economy, the president and his party face a hardening political environment here in advance of legislative and key gubernatorial elections later this year. In this political environment, each of the parties including the governing National Action Party (PAN) have assumed a more assertive, populist stance. Comments on the U.S. regarding its "responsibility" for Mexico's organized crime problem, and calls on the U.S. to solve its own "corruption" problems should be viewed in light of the building competition for votes, as well as sensitivity about several U.S. reports describing Mexico as a potential "failed state." All three of the main political parties in the legislature have their eyes on the bellwether 2009 elections, and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), in particular, is expected to make gains. The window of opportunity to effectively cooperate with a divided congress on major reform initiatives is rapidly closing.

#### THE MERIDA INITIATIVE

¶9. (SBU) The Merida Initiative represents an historic opportunity for the U.S. and Mexico to demonstrate shared

resolve in facing up to the challenges posed by organized crime across our border. The U.S. is assisting Mexico this year with \$400 million in assistance programs earmarked for inspection equipment, communications technology, technical assistance, training, and helicopters and surveillance aircraft. Rollout of non-intrusive inspection equipment -- helpful for the detection and interdiction of trafficked drugs, arms, and cash ) - is underway with \$40 million for Public Security (SSP) and 32.5 million for Customs (SAT).

¶10. (SBU) There have been some complaints from Mexican officials (including President Calderon) and in the press about delays in program implementation, but there is a smooth flow of programs and increasingly close cooperation across multiple agencies that is producing an entirely new architecture for bilateral security cooperation. There are projects which have already begun to bear fruit and most of the programs should be underway by the summer, although many are long term in nature and will not yield early results.

#### FIREARMS-TRAFFICKING ISSUES

¶11. (SBU) Mexican political leaders are not shy about reminding us that U.S. demand for drugs, money laundering, and illegal arms flows from our side of the border help fuel Mexico's drug war. With respect to firearms trafficking, the GOM has identified a number of areas where they would like the U.S. to do more, particularly on our side of the border to interdict weapons before they reach Mexico. Senior GOM officials have asked that we be more aggressive in enforcing existing laws regarding the sale and exportation of weapons. This includes cracking down on straw purchasers who buy guns on smugglers' behalf in the United States. They have also pushed for renewing the import ban on semi-automatic assault weapons that expired in 2004.

¶12. (SBU) While recognizing the value of E-Trace, some GOM officials have expressed frustration that the system only traces to the first sale source, but the weapons are often

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re-sold multiple times. Another complaint is with a lengthy delay in translating the system into Spanish.

¶13. The Firearms Trafficking Conference comes on the heels of the March 24 announcement of USG plans to beef up federal presence along the border. DHS Secretary Napolitano announced that the U.S. would designate 360 more agents to the Border Patrol and ICE units along the border, and that 100 extra agents would be sent to ATF units based along the border. Although the GOM has long complained of Washington's "militarization" of the border as a means of stopping illegal immigration, the move has drawn praise from senior Mexican officials who said the initiative shows a renewed effort from Washington to accept responsibility in the nation's drug war.

Foreign Relations Secretary Patricia Espinosa said the plan signified "a new era of cooperation" in fighting the drug war, and noted "the determination of both governments to stamp out the trafficking of weapons, chemical precursors and cash from the United States to Mexico." Senator Santiago Creel from Calderon's National Action Party (PAN) said the move is a welcome change from the Bush Administration which he said had done "the minimum" in helping to combat organized crime.

¶14. (SBU) The Firearms Trafficking Conference is an important opportunity to highlight existing DHS/ICE and DOJ/ATF efforts in interdicting the flow of munitions into Mexico, as well as identify areas to advance our bilateral cooperation on this front. At the same time, it is important to underscore our support for President Calderon's counter crime strategy by:

--Acknowledging our shared responsibility to combat the illegal narcotics trade, stressing our commitment, and

ongoing efforts, to stem the illegal flow of firearms into Mexico, combat money laundering and reduce demand for narcotics in the United States.

--Noting the successes President Calderon has achieved to date.

--Supporting his efforts to reform Mexico's security forces and criminal justice system.

--Noting the contribution the Merida Initiative will make to the considerable resources Mexico is already putting into its war on organized crime, and the regional benefits of cross-border cooperation against cross-border criminal networks.

¶15. (U) Please let me know if there is anything I and my staff can do to advance the goals of your visits here. We look forward to your arrival.  
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BASSETT